

# European union an the member states : organised hypocrisy?

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# **The European Union and the Member States: Organised Hypocrisy?**

Thomas Christiansen\*

Dear Rein, dear Professors, dear colleagues, dear family and friends: thank you for attending my inauguration today. It is my pleasure and my privilege to have this opportunity to present to you some ideas about the nature of European integration, and in particular about the contribution I hope to make to the field of European Studies in my new position.

## **Introduction**

Accepting a Chair in European Institutional Politics at Maastricht University is a special honour, not only because Maastricht University is a young, dynamic and successful university with global ambitions, or because our faculty is home to one of the largest and fastest-growing European Studies programmes. It is special also because it was here in Maastricht that in the early 1990s the Treaty on European Union was negotiated and signed – an event that arguably constituted the most important reform in the history of European integration.

What we call the Maastricht Treaty was actually a revision of the Community's original founding treaties – the Rome Treaties – and it introduced momentous innovations to the EU (Laursen & Vanhoonacker, 1994). One only needs to mention the creation of the single currency – considered by many at the time to be an impossible project (Dyson & Featherstone, 1999) – in order to illustrate the significance of the Maastricht Treaty. Or think of the introduction of the co-decision procedure which gave equality to the European Parliament and Council of Ministers in the making of EU laws – something that when proposed by the Parliament a decade earlier was rejected by most governments (Pinder, 2007). Each of these changes in itself can be considered revolutionary, not just in the context of European integration but also in terms of international politics more generally. Here in Maastricht, the integration process not only came of age – it underwent a fundamental transformation.

## **The Legacy of the Maastricht Treaty**

One might think that what happened here in 1991 is old news or history, but at second sight it becomes evident that those decisions have had a lasting effect, still shaping European politics on a daily basis. Just take the Euro and consider the events of the current year, with debt crises in Greece and other member states ultimately

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destabilising the monetary position of the entire Eurozone (Euractiv, 2010). Coming a decade after the successful introduction of the new currency, and following a long period of monetary stability, the events of the past year demonstrated that crucial elements of the Union's framework were missing – that the Union was not ready to withstand the pressures it would face in the context of the global financial crisis. It turned out that the idea of *centralising* monetary policy-making at the European level – through the creation of the European Central Bank – while at the same time leaving decisions about fiscal policy with the member states was flawed (Dyson & Featherstone, 1999, p.129-130, p.222).

Cynics – and that is what political scientists tend to be – might add that we should not be surprised to see national governments, having passed on the responsibility for monetary stability to a faraway body of European central bankers in Frankfurt, might feel even more inclined to run up public deficits by spending money they actually don't have. (Let me add, in brackets, that the fact that some governments were found to have lied to the EU about the size of their budget deficits (European Commission, 2010a), should not have come as a surprise either. Instead, we may regard that as the natural outcome of the decision to leave the responsibility for the collection of statistical data to national governments, with the predictable result that in certain member states figures were manipulated in order to escape criticism from Europe. Things only came to light when the damage had already been done, and the consequences were impossible to hide). Clearly, the system set up in Maastricht to underpin the single currency was missing some important safeguards.

Yet, it had been *national* governments that had negotiated and signed the Maastricht Treaty, and *national* parliaments that had ratified it (Moravcsik, 1998, p.379-471; Dyson & Featherstone, 1999, p.770). They *did* realise that perhaps some safeguards were needed (in other words, that states might not be able to trust each other to keep their commitments). That is why the treaty contained the so-called convergence criteria – minimum levels of economic and fiscal performance that countries had to achieve in order to be admitted into the Eurozone (Dyson & Featherstone, 1999, p.430-432). And, yes, member states did make efforts to bring their houses in order in the run-up to the creation of the single currency (Angeloni and Dedola, 1999). Only after the honeymoon of the successful introduction of the euro was over, the realisation dawned on them that it might be insufficient to rely only on hope and good will in trying to ensure a continuation of sound economic and fiscal policy (Waigel, 1995). The fear – metaphorically speaking - was that the new members of the exclusive euro-club, having dressed up really well in order to get in, might then shed their clothes as soon as they passed through the door.

Once this particular loophole in the treaty arrangement had been identified, member states went back to the negotiating table and set up a "Growth and Stability Pact" in order to ensure that the original convergence criteria would continue to be applied as stability criteria (Cini, 2007, p.329). Good idea, but again only a half-baked solution to the problem of unreliable compliance by the member states. It didn't take long for some member states to trespass on these criteria, and then for the European Commission to be brushed aside when trying to enforce the rules (Case C-27/04). Ironically, it was the same member state - Germany - that had first pushed for the stability pact, that then broke these same rules a few years later, then insisted that it wasn't the role of the Commission to sanction such non-compliance, and that during the recent crisis has been

most critical (Spiehl Online, 2010) when in other member states things went badly wrong.

### **States in the European Union: Patterns of Hypocrisy**

I hope you follow me in detecting a pattern here: first, since the 1970s statesmen declared the aim of creating a single currency in Europe, but actually made little progress towards achieving that aim (Werner Report, 1970). Later, in the 1990s, when the creation of a single currency was finally agreed – and celebrated – member states were unwilling to accept the new constraints that came – or should have come – with such a change. And subsequently, once the need for a set of binding rules had become evident, they refused to hand over the necessary powers of enforcement to the supranational institutions of the EU, insisting instead that the states, coming together in the Council, would supervise themselves. Only now, a major crisis and a bail-out worth more than €500 billion later (Council of the European Union, 2010), is it becoming accepted that the Commission does in fact need to have stronger powers to oversee national fiscal policies if we are to prevent future accidents. Last June it was eventually decided that in the future national budgets will have to be submitted to the EU in advance for prior assessment, and that in this way the stability criteria will be enforced more stringently (European Council, 2010).

The pattern that I am alluding to here is one hypocrisy: of governments making far-reaching commitments that they are not willing or able to keep, of politicians giving speeches declaring their allegiance to the European idea but pursuing behind closed doors parochial national interests; of member states working together – but often working together only in order to defeat the ambitions of the supranational European institutions - Commission, Parliament and Court - that have been set up to pursue the common interest.

Now one might respond: so what? It is only human and natural that some will sometimes try to lie and cheat. In politicians we have in fact come to expect that sort of thing. And the infamous ‘blame game’ that national leaders often play vis-à-vis the EU – accepting for themselves the praise for the achievements of the Union while shifting the blame to ‘Brussels’ for failures or for having to take unwelcome decisions – is well-known and understood by all who study EU politics (Graziano & Vink, 2007, p.15). But the kind of hypocrisy that we just discussed in the case of decision-making around the euro goes beyond that. It is part and parcel of the way in which states routinely interact with the European institutions.

And, by the way, states are *not* human (even though I realise I also talk of them here as if they were unitary actors). States are political organisations, indeed the state is *the* political organisation of our age. This pattern of hypocrisy in the way member states relate to the EU is organised, systematic and in many ways built into the very functioning of the European Union – I will come back to that argument with some insights from my own field of study in a moment.

### **The Concept of Organised Hypocrisy**

But let me first of all say a few words about the concept of ‘organised hypocrisy’ which I am using here because I think it makes for a suitable, if provocative, description of some

aspects of EU politics. The term was introduced by Stephen Krasner, Professor of International Relations at Stanford University, who published his book *Sovereignty: Organised Hypocrisy* in 1999 (Krasner, 1999). His subject was not Europe, but the international system at large, and in his analysis he sought to show how states regularly and systematically flaunt even the most basic rule of the international system, namely the principle of sovereignty. Our political world – the ‘Westphalian system’, so called after the peace treaties ending the Thirty Years War in 1645 – is supposedly based on the sovereignty of the territorial state. Sovereignty, meaning the presence of a single and absolute authority within the state and none beyond it, facilitates the delineation of an ‘inside’ – domestic politics based on the presence of a hierarchical state structure – and the ‘outside’ – international relations which are potentially anarchical in the absence of any global sovereign (Palmer & Colton & Kramer, 2007, p.140-141). This inside/outside divide created by the principle of sovereignty is the foundation not only of the modern state system, but also the basis for political community, facilitating developments such as nationalism, democracy and the welfare state.

In challenging this very basic building block of modern politics, Krasner not only provided many examples in which states showed themselves not to be sovereign – not being in control of their territory – but went further by identifying a pattern of interaction among states that actually went against the very principle upon which their existence supposedly rests. As Krasner observed, ‘every major peace settlement from Westphalia to Dayton has involved violations of the Westphalian sovereign state model’ (Krasner, 2001, p.41). Crucially, the organised hypocrisy around sovereignty involves both conflictual and cooperative relations. Krasner argued that states may formally accept the kind of limitations to sovereignty that come with, for example, the universal protection of human rights, because they can be confident that in practice such rights may not be implemented domestically. That is why he concludes, with a view to human rights declarations made by states before the United Nations General Assembly, that state ‘actors say one thing and do another’ (Krasner, 2001, p.19).

### **The Hidden Path towards European Constitutionalization**

Which brings us back to the European Union. Of course the example of monetary integration that I mentioned before was only a sketch of the much more complex processes behind the politics of the EU. And, as it happens, I am not really an expert on EMU. But I thought that the experience of the euro is a neat illustration of the kind of pattern that I have often encountered in my own work on European institutions. Given that my chair is in the *institutional politics* of the EU, I would like to share with you some observations about two particular aspects of EU politics that I have been working on myself: first, the process of constitutionalizing the EU and, second, the relationship between member states and the European Commission.

Talking of a process of European constitutionalization might remind some of you of the ill-fated attempt by the EU leaders some years ago to give the Union a ‘European Constitution’ (Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, 2004). It might even remind a few of the locals present to actually having gone and voted in a referendum – a privilege that Germans and most other European citizens did not have. And remembering the ‘No’ vote delivered in the Netherlands and in France – a vote that eventually killed off the Constitutional Treaty – you may wonder whether talk of ‘constitutionalization’ has any value today. With the ‘European Constitution’ dead and

buried, together with the lofty ambitions of its drafters, the EU has returned to the more immediate task of 'getting down to business' (Financial Times, 2005).

But the idea that the Union has retreated from a process of constitutionalization is precisely the mistaken view - dare I say, the deception - that I think constitutes an example of 'organised hypocrisy'. Let me briefly summarise the process of constitutionalization as I see it. Firstly, the Union, or rather, the European Community, was established in the 1950s as an international organisation based on a treaty among states. No need for any constitution at that point. In fact, the integration project launched by Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Jean Monnet was specifically set up in a technocratic manner because the more ambitious plans by federalists like Altiero Spinelli, which might have led to the constitution for a European Federation, had failed to carry the day after the Second World War (Haas, 1958). Instead of grand designs, six states got together, initially merely to manage their natural resources collectively, and to achieve in the process, as a very intended but implicit consequence, a lasting reconciliation between Germany and its neighbours (Cini, 2007, p.18-19). Thus, European integration appeared initially a project of purely *economic* integration, with no obvious need for anything like a constitution (Milward, 1984).

However, over the past six decades the nature of the enterprise has fundamentally changed. There have been frequent reforms, be it through informal agreements among the states, through the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice, or, more recently, through the kind of treaty revision that was agreed here in Maastricht. As a result, the character of the project has been transformed. The EU is now recognised as a deeply political, and highly politicised, arena in which decisions are taken on a daily basis that have a direct impact on the lives of citizens. This gradual and long-lasting process of transforming the nature of the European Union is, in my view, best characterised as constitutionalization given that it has created a polity with a strong foundation of basic rules and norms that frame the way in which decisions are taken, and that cannot be easily changed even by a majority of the actors involved (see also Weiler, 1999).

Analysing this long-term process of gradual and largely hidden constitutionalization has been one of the areas on which I have focused in my research over the past few years. It was perhaps more fortune than foresight that I published, in 1999, an article together with Knud Erik Jørgensen in which we set out conceptually why and how treaty reform in the EU needed to be studied as such a *process* rather than, as was the mainstream approach then, a series of discrete *events* (Christiansen & Jørgensen, 1999). Fortunate because soon afterwards, in May 2000, the then German foreign minister Joschka Fischer gave his famous speech at the Humboldt University in Berlin outlining what he called the "strategic prospects for European integration far beyond the coming decade" – prospects which led him to push for – and I quote:

the realisation of the project of a European constitution centred around basic, human and civil rights, an equal division of powers between the European institutions and a precise delineation between European and nation-state level (Fischer, 2000, p.7).

Fischer's speech signalled the launch of a vibrant discourse about a European Constitution, leading to the setting up of the "Convention on the Future of Europe" chaired by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to the signing of the Constitutional Treaty in 2003 and concluding, as we already mentioned, in the debacle of the popular rejection of this treaty in several member-states (Church & Phinnemore, 2005).

In other words, the past decade turned out to be one long-drawn out process of debate, negotiation and ratification of treaty reform in the European Union. Having had developed previously the conceptual lenses required to study such a process – for example to identify not only the actors involved but also the political, legal and ideational structures in which such agency takes place – allowed me to ‘connect the dots’ and develop a better sense of what was happening. The result was the publication of a book, together with Christine Reh, in which we built on this analytical framework and applied it both to the long-term and the more recent developments in this respect (Christiansen, & Reh, 2009).

Seen from such a long-term perspective, the drafting of the 'Constitutional Treaty' was not the huge revolution as which it was presented by Fischer, Giscard and others (Giscard d'Estaing, 2002). (Nor should it have, in my view, necessitated the extraordinary step to call referenda in countries like France or the Netherlands that do not have a domestic tradition of using such instruments of participatory democracy). As I have argued, the EU already had a constitutional order, albeit resting on a partially unwritten and evolving set of basic rules and norms (Weiler, 1996), long before the ‘need’ for a formal European Constitution was elevated to the top of the Union’s agenda. What politicians in the member states needed to do – and where they ultimately failed – was to make that fact transparent and acceptable to their citizens.

### **The Lisbon Treaty: Constitutionalization in Disguise**

What is perhaps more significant still in the context of this lecture is the fact that this process continued further even *after* the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty. National governments took some time out – a “period of reflection” – only to then re-package most of the ‘European Constitution’ as the Lisbon Treaty, which was signed by the Heads of State and Government in the Portuguese capital in December 2006 and which came into force last year (Dogan, 2008, p.619-620). The Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty: two documents with essentially the same content (Corthaut, 2008), but quite the reverse spin in the way in which politicians presented this to their domestic audiences. When initially we were told that a ‘European Constitution’ was needed because such a document would provide the legitimacy for the exercise of the power that had accumulated in Brussels over the previous decades, a few years later the message was that these same changes were actually rather marginal and did not warrant much attention. Consequently, compared to the eight national referenda which were foreseen for the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, only one was held on the Lisbon Treaty. And whereas the ‘no’ votes in France and the Netherlands had blocked the ratification of the Constitution, the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland simply forced the need for a second referendum at which the Irish obliged and produced an ultimately positive result.

Across the board, the message was that this new Lisbon Treaty did not really warrant much scrutiny, in total contrast to the revolutionary significance and extraordinary attention that had been accorded to the European Constitution, even though most observers agree that there is little material difference between two documents. The point here is not whether one or the other view of the significance of this treaty reform is correct, but simply that state leaders were able to switch their message on this issue around by 180 degrees – and got away with it.

Let us remember that we are not talking about some minor technical regulation coming out of 'Brussels', but about the most important reform of the Union since the Maastricht Treaty; about vast powers which are being accumulated at the European level; about the fundamental political architecture of this continent for the coming decades. It is a project that should engage the European citizens, and yet the overwhelming feeling coming from the streets is one of lethargy and disenchantment with the EU (European Commission, 2009, p.21). And who can blame 'the people' for not understanding, or indeed for objecting to, the way in which decisions are taken in Brussels, when national politicians so blatantly misrepresent what is at stake at key moments in the construction of the European Union.

What the Lisbon Treaty actually does is re-define the competences of the EU institutions and their relations with each other as well as with the member states. This includes innovations such as the creation of a European External Action Service, the appointment of a European Council President, the introduction of the possibility for European-wide citizen initiatives, and above all a significant expansion of the powers of the European Parliament (Christiansen & Reh, 2009). What impact these reforms will have on the EU's political system remains to be seen, since not all of these new elements have yet been implemented or applied. The next few years will continue to be an interesting and exciting period for European integration, and I look forward to making my contribution to the analysis of these changing political dynamics in a book for Oxford University Press that will be co-authored with Edward Best and Wolfgang Wessels (Best, Christiansen & Wessels, forthcoming).

### **The European Commission: Institutional Independence and National Interests**

But not wanting to speculate here about the way in which these changes will pan out, I propose to shift the focus to one particular aspect of the EU's institutional politics in Brussels by taking a closer look at the interaction between member states and the European Commission. I would argue that this is yet another opportunity to observe how the 'official version' of EU politics is frequently in conflict with the way in which member states act in practice.

I should preface my observations by saying that the very notion of creating *supranational* institutions – the Commission as the European executive, the Parliament as part of the European legislature, and the European Court as the European judiciary – means that these should be *above* the states, acting independently, in the common European interest and without receiving directions from national governments (Art. 245 TFEU; Art. 253 TFEU; Nugent, 2006, p.155, p.293). The presence of such institutions with an independent authority is one of the hallmarks of the European Union, indeed it is arguably *the* defining aspect of European integration that sets it apart from the kind of cooperation that occurs in other global regions (Best & Christiansen, 2008, p.578-597). Unfortunately, the 'independence' of the European institutions is also a legal fiction.

Allow me to introduce my argument with a brief anecdote from the earlier stages of my career. When graduating from university, I applied – like a few million others before and after me – for an internship at the European Commission. As one does, I of course did not rely on the inherent quality of my CV, but activated a contact I had in a particular Directorate. This Head of Unit told me that he would do what he could to try and get me on the shortlist, but that it would be quite competitive and that I should not get my



hopes up. Then he added: "But your surname should help." I asked him what that meant, and he explained that the final decision on the selected interns in his department was made by the European Commissioner himself, and that in his case was the Danish Commissioner. In approving names on the shortlist, chances were that a Danish-sounding name would not be crossed out. How fortunate for a North German to slip through the net like that!

This was just the first experience in many that showed me how much nationality and national interests still matter in an institution that was supposedly above all that. In some ways things might have improved – the Commission has been through serious crisis and several rounds of reforms since then. Yet the fact remains that member states do not only rely on the formal and legitimate route of representing their interests in the Council of Ministers, but also systematically seek to influence the work of the Commission from the inside. The real concern in this respect is of course not about lowly interns (though I found the fact that even here nationality matters quite extraordinary). What matters politically and analytically are the dynamics at the top of the Commission, namely the role played by the 27 European Commissioners – one from each member state. Their appointment is – formally – not at all about the representation of 'their' country inside the Commission. However, national governments propose the candidates for the Commission and appoint them collectively, and it is widely acknowledged that, once appointed, they often play the role of a 'secondary ambassador' of their country in Brussels (Eppink, 2007, p.119). When speaking up in internal meetings in defence of their member state interests, a Commissioner will camouflage his or her comments by referring to "the country I know best", but often the representation of member state interests, and the bargaining and horse-trading that comes with it, is only very thinly veiled.

The significance that member states attach to the presence of 'their' Commissioner at the top table became evident during the recent reform negotiations. In the wake of Eastern enlargement, the larger member states, led by France, were keen to reduce the size of the Commission in order to counter the growing number of small state representatives there (Norman, 2005, p.118-121). The larger states were concerned that, under the 'one person/one vote' decision-making system operated by the Commission, they would lose power, given that they had already previously given up their right to have two Commissioners at the table. Smaller states fought back, and what was eventually agreed was a reduced number of Commissioners and a system of rotation that would provide equality.

Even that compromise however, which didn't really satisfy either side of the argument, turned out to be unacceptable. As mentioned before, in Ireland – in the one member state that put the Lisbon Treaty to a vote of its citizens – the initial referendum ended in a rejection of the treaty. 'Losing our Commissioner', as the 'No' Campaign referred to it, was one of the key points that people objected to (Laffan, n.d., p.3-4), and the positive result in a second referendum was only secured after a deal was struck among the member states *not* to reduce the size of the Commission. In the end, all states were able to keep 'their' Commissioner, and business as usual is bound to continue.

One might be forgiven for thinking I am talking about the Council, so blatant has been the bargaining over the relative influence that member states may or may not have via 'their' Commissioner. My intention here is not to incriminate any individuals. As a matter of fact, many Commissioners have demonstrated over the years that they are

willing and able to stand up to the pressure from national capitals. The intervention this week from Commissioner Reding, condemning the shameful mass expulsion of Roma from France, is a good example of a European Commission not afraid to speak up against powerful member states (European Commission, 2010).

### **The Changing Role of National Governments in European Institutional Politics**

My point remains, though, that there has been a pattern of member states seeking the undeniable benefits of an integrated Europe – the economic growth that comes from open markets, the security and stability that arises from institutionalised cooperation, the greater weight in world politics that results from speaking with one voice. States seek these benefits while constantly trying to escape the political ‘cost’ of integration, whether this involves accepting uncomfortable limits on the choices they face in their domestic politics, or the empowerment of a truly independent authority beyond the state. In this sense, the way in which states have sought to maintain supposedly independent Commissioners as representatives of national interests in Brussels is just the tip of the iceberg. A more extended discussion (if we had the time) might also include the following actions by national politicians:

- strategically ‘parachuting’ their own nationals into senior positions in the Commission (Christiansen, 1997, p.83)
- seeking to ‘get their money back’ from the EU budget, be it openly à la Mrs Thatcher or behind the scenes by politicising individual spending decisions (Laffan, 1997)
- delegating powers to implement EU policies to the European Commission, only to then interfere in the exercise of these powers through a complex web of comitology committees (Christiansen & Larsson, 2005)
- frequently failing to comply with EU legislation, even after being sentenced by the European Court of Justice for such infringements (Nicolaidis & Oberg, 2006)
- lobbying – and that is the polite term – ‘their’ Members of the European Parliament to vote along national rather than party political lines (Farrell & Heritier, 2003, p.9), or
- regularly turning European elections into little more than opinion polls on national governments and specific domestic issues (Hix & Marsh, 2005, p.3).

The list goes on, but I hope my point about the organised hypocrisy that EU states engage in has been made. I realise that this argument is somewhat polemical, and that a comprehensive analysis would deliver a more nuanced picture of what goes on. But in a time in which the European institutions are frequently criticised – ironically sometimes for over-reacting and sometimes for inaction – I thought it was important to correct this image by pointing out the degree to which it is often not the EU institutions, but rather the member states, that are failing in their responsibility. That it is why it is important to remember that the reasons for any malaise of the European Union are to be found as much in the national capitals as in Brussels.

European integration is, after all, a two-level game (Putnam, 1988, p.433), played out within the member states as much as at the European level (Graziano & Vink, 2007, p.15). In fact, integration has brought about a system of multilevel governance with a

multitude of actors on several territorial levels (Hooghe, Marks & Blank, 1998; Piattoni, 2009). In recognition of this, our field of study has evolved tremendously over the past decade, to provide increasingly sophisticated analyses of the many aspects of this emerging polity. My comments on patterns of organised hypocrisy don't do justice to the complexity in both the real world and the academic study of EU politics. They are merely meant to serve as a reminder that we should not overlook the continuing influence that member states still have in this system, and the many different forms that this influence takes.

But I should take care not to come across as being too negative or critical. I am not saying that the EU is a sham, or that everything that is being said or done by national politicians is fraudulent. On balance I would in fact argue that things are improving, and the Lisbon Treaty reforms should further strengthen the power of Commission, Parliament and Court to act independently vis-à-vis the national governments. Above all it is to be hoped that, in the future, we will see a more direct engagement between citizens and European institutions, so that governments will not be able to exploit the lack of awareness about European affairs for their own purposes. Once the people see through the often hypocritical behaviour of their national governments, it will be difficult for this pattern to be maintained. Also in this sense, these are interesting times to study, research and write about the institutional politics of the European Union, and I very much look forward to doing this here at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

### **Acknowledgements and Thanks**

I am new to the Dutch university system, and there is a lot for me to learn in terms of both formal procedures and unwritten rules. But thanks to having already started here in a part-time appointment a couple of years ago, the learning curve for me is fortunately not as steep as it would otherwise be. I am of course not new to Maastricht, having spent the past seven years at the European Institute of Public Administration.

Thus it has not been a huge move geographically, but in terms of the working culture and the target group there is quite a difference and I might take a while to re-adapt to academia. In doing so, I am lucky to always have access to the friendly advice and professional counsel of Tannelie Blom, Sophie Vanhoonacker, Christine Neuhold, Maarten Vink and all the other colleagues too numerous to mention here. I am really extremely grateful to everyone for having made me feel welcome here from the start. That of course also includes our Dean, and I would like to thank you personally, Rein, for the trust you have placed in me by appointing me to this position.

Having already spoken at some length about my research agenda, let me add how much I look forward to making a contribution to teaching at FASoS. My main task in this initial period has been to take over from Tannelie as Director of Studies for our new Research Masters in European Studies. The RMES is a major undertaking, and it has been a great achievement by Tannelie and the whole team to have launched that last year. I am aware of my responsibility in taking this over and hope I will be able to build on the early success that this new programme has had so far. My heartfelt thanks go to Elissaveta Radulova who has been doing a fantastic job in helping me to negotiate the complex procedures we have in place to organise our Masters teaching. I am also pleased that I will have the opportunity to keep working with my former EIPA colleagues in the context of the EPA masters. I should add that Simon Duke and I will probably have a lot more work together in the future, given the success of the *Journal of*

*European Integration* which we jointly edit, and I am very pleased about our excellent cooperation and our achievement in providing a home for the journal here in Maastricht. I look forward to continuing that regardless of my move across the Vrijthof. Here at the faculty, I am glad to have been invited to lead, together with Tannelie, Sophie and Nico Randeraad, the research programme on Administrative Governance which provides an excellent forum to explore issues such as the ones I raised here in greater depth (Maastricht University, 2010). And I am pleased that in working with Tom van Veen and Youngah Guahk on our institutional relations with partners in China and in Korea, respectively, I have the opportunity to contribute actively to our efforts of fully internationalising the educational experience at Maastricht University.

Clearly, there is a lot to look forward to in taking up this position, but inevitably there is also a considerable period of time to look back on when becoming a professor. The kind of academic career that I and many of my peers embarked on requires not only mental flexibility and life-long learning, but also geographical mobility. A day like today, when organising an event like this, is a timely reminder that geography still matters in these internet-dominated times. I left Hamburg during my studies in 1988, initially only to take a year abroad at the London School of Economics. The fact that this departure from my hometown was permanent only revealed itself gradually, as one career choice led to another in the kind of personal path-dependency that is not unusual in our line of work. It has been exciting and rewarding to study in Hamburg, London and Florence, to work in Luxembourg, Essex and Wales, and to teach for shorter periods in Victoria, Bruges, Barcelona, Moscow, Madrid, Strasbourg, Cologne and, most recently, in Seoul. But this sort of life does take a toll on one's private life and makes it very difficult to stay in touch with family and friends. Fortunately I have been blessed with loyal friends, and I would like to thank in particular Katrin Hilken, with whom I went to high school, Wolfgang Weeren, with whom I studied economics in Hamburg, Anne Karen Christensen, with whom I worked together in London, and Thomas Widlok, who lined up in front of me in the registration queue at the LSE and who, after many travels of his own, now holds a chair at Nijmegen University. Thank you not just for joining us today, but indeed for keeping in touch over all these years in the past.

Going even further back in time, this is of course a moment to thank my parents for their unwavering support from day one, which made it possible for me to do well in school, to attend university, to study abroad and, above all, to think freely – the foundation of any academic career. It is a moment I would have liked to share with my father, but in his absence I am all the more grateful that my mother and brother are here with me today.

Finally I want to thank you, Youngah, for your love, your support and your advice over the last years. We both know the sacrifices that you have made in moving to Maastricht, the difficulties you have faced since coming here, and the hard work you have had in creating a new professional life for yourself. And we both know that I would not be speaking here today without the positive influence that you have had on my life and my work. I am glad that taking up this chair also gives us both the chance to make Maastricht our common home. To be honest – that is the most exciting prospect for me today.

Ik heb gezegd.

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